National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
2007 Annual Report to Congress on Implementation of Public Law 106-107

I. Overview

During the period of September 1, 2006 to November 30, 2007, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the grant-making arm of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), made 103 awards totaling $6,798,703. All awards in this period were discretionary grants. NHPRC staff members served on the Grants Executive Board, the Grants Policy Committee of the Chief Financial Officers' Council, the Federal Funding Accounting and Transparency Act (FFATA) Task Force, the Grants Management Line of Business (GM LoB) Consortia Recommendation Committee, and the Grants.gov Users' Group.

II. Grants.gov

The NHPRC posted 15 grant announcements, or 100% of its program announcements, in Grants.gov FIND during the reporting period. All 15 of these grant programs were available for electronic application through Grants.gov APPLY, representing 100% of available opportunities from the agency. The NHPRC made available all application packages for all competitive opportunities via Grants.gov.

During the reporting period, the NHPRC received a total of 302 grant applications. Of this number the Commission received 232 applications via Grants.gov, comprising 77% of total applications received. The Commission also received 70 grant proposals (23% of total received) via a paper application process, delivered via email attachment or through standard mail delivery. Paper submissions comprised two groups: (1) existing multi-year grant applications originally submitted on paper prior to our transition to an exclusive Grants.gov application requirement, and (2) new applications accepted during those NHPRC grant cycles for which the electronic application process was optional rather than mandatory. During this brief transition period, the NHPRC accepted both paper and Grants.gov applications in order to assist those applicants who needed additional time to adopt an all electronic process. The NHPRC began requiring electronic submissions via Grants.gov for applications starting in March 2007, approximately midway through the reporting period.

During the reporting period Grants.gov provided the NHPRC with several cost avoidances, including savings in publication expenses, application distribution costs, training expenses, forms clearance process costs, and applicant registration validation expenses. Our applicant community derived cost savings as well in such areas as reduced postal costs, reduced research costs in identifying and applying for grant opportunities, as well as the overall benefit of an increased awareness of Federal grant opportunities for archives nationwide, including those in state, local and tribal governments.

The NHPRC staff received Grants.gov training as necessary, with those experienced in Grants.gov processes providing informal hands-on tutorials for new or less experienced

staff members. Staff achieved higher levels of sophistication with their use of Grants.gov, as full implementation of the electronic application process was successfully completed during the reporting period.

The NHPRC staff also participated in Grants.gov outreach to its applicant community at national gatherings of its various constituencies, including meetings of the Society of American Archivists, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, the Council of State Archivists, the Association for Documentary Editing, the National Conference of Tribal Libraries, Museums, and Archives, and the annual Documentary Editing Institute. The NHPRC staff also provided guidance on Grants.gov processes and procedures at regional gatherings of professionals, including meetings of the New England Archivists, Northwest Archivists, Society of California Archivists, and the Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. In addition, the Commission updated and continued to distribute its brochure that summarizes the steps necessary for applicants to follow when using the Grants.gov FIND and APPLY features. We distributed approximately 250 of these brochures during this reporting period. Finally, the NHPRC continued to update its website to include detailed instructions to applicants on using the Grants.gov FIND and APPLY features and ensured that all appropriate links to the Grants.gov portal were accurate and active.

III. Grants Management Line of Business (GM LoB)

During the reporting period, the NARA/NHPRC renewed its Memorandum of Understanding and Interagency Agreement with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for service and maintenance of the Commission's back-office Grants Management System (GMS). NARA and its constituents continued to enjoy the benefits of a cost effective grants management system by sharing the technical solutions and system developed by the NEH as our federal service provider. During the reporting period, NARA's system-to-system interface with Grants.gov became fully operational, standard reporting forms and reports (for example, grant summaries, staff reports, etc.) and templates (for example, official grant award documents, active grant lists, overdue reports, grant officer portfolio lists, etc.) were completed, and internal system controls over peer review and panel review processes were adopted. These steps resulted in NARA/NHPRC making substantial progress in eliminating the use of manual and paper-based systems. In addition, the agency achieved an enhanced capacity for systematic analysis and reporting using the GMS, developing first-time capabilities for creating its grants-related Government Performance Reporting Act (GPRA) and Federal Assistance Award Database (FAADS) reports directly from its GMS system. The NEH-provided GMS was central to the NHPRC's timely, substantially complete submission of FAADS related data to OMB.

NARA/NHPRC remained mindful of its GM LoB obligations and opportunities during the reporting period. Our strategy has always been and will continue to be one that follows the vision and spirit of the GM LoB by maximizing our existing partnership and cultivating new ones to the fullest extent possible, all at minimal costs that can be met using existing resources. As a result, much of NARA's grants management work with its

existing system and service provider during these fifteen months was carried out in preparation for the agency's full participation in the grants management line of business environment, where shared resources and common standards and practices promote the greatest public benefit. With this in mind, NARA reengineered and streamlined several of its grant application review, award, and post award processes to take advantage of standardized practices and protocols and the public benefits to be derived from them.

For example, NARA/NHPRC continued to post its grant announcements on Grants.gov, including 100 percent of both synopses and packages, and began leveraging NEH's proven system-to-system interface to directly ingest applications from Grants.gov into GMS. This replaced a manual application input procedure in 2006. The synergy of Grants.gov with the NEH Grants Management System allowed NARA/NHPRC to successfully mandate that all new grant applications be submitted via Grants.gov by early FY2007.

The grant-seeking public will also benefit from time savings as a result of quicker notification and faster payments due to an automated system for grants processing. We envision the development of a fully operational grants management system with NEH (and other potential partners) that will minimize complex and varying agency-specific requirements and enhance grantee interactions with NARA/NHPRC and its grants processes and procedures.

Specific cost benefits to NARA include savings and cost avoidance related to file storage costs estimated at $1,000 annually; staff and material costs totaling $1,500 annually; electronic application transfer and exchanges totaling $800 annually; and organizational costs associated with diverse processes, forms, and system totaling $2,000 annually. With the GM LoB we envision, services to constituents will be continually improved through the standardization and streamlining of our grants business processes, achieved through cooperative agreements with NEH and other federal grant-making agencies. We expect that the public will receive time savings as a result of quicker notification and faster payments due to an automated system for grants processing. Constituents will benefit by having fewer unique agency systems and processes to learn; grantees' ability to learn how to interact with chosen systems will be improved, and reliance agency technical support will be reduced as their familiarity with such systems grows through training and use.

IV. Debarment and Suspension

NARA published a non-procurement debarment-suspension in a new agency chapter in Subtitle B of 2 CFR on January 23, 2007 in the Federal Register at 72 FR 2768. It became effective on February 28, 2007. NARA removed its codification of the common rule for its own chapter - 36 CFR chapter XII - as a part of the same rulemaking modification with the same dates cited above.

V. Looking Ahead

Building on its successful relationship with the National Endowment for the Humanities, NARA/ NHPRC will continue to implement shared grants management functionalities. We will continue its participation in all GM LoB Consortia efforts and work. NARA/NHPRC remains on-schedule to submit fit/gap analyses of consortia leads in December 2007. NARA/NHPRC will accompany its completed fit-gaps with a formal appeal, as a part the consortia lead process, so that it may further its work with NEH and other potential partners with similar scope, business processes, and applicant communities. If this appeal is denied, the agency will strive to meet all required milestones established by OMB or authorized entities. In aligning with an approved consortia lead, NARA/NHPRC anticipates significant, additional financial resources will be necessary to meet member costs as well as adjustments in work flows to make up for lost functionalities.